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English 33

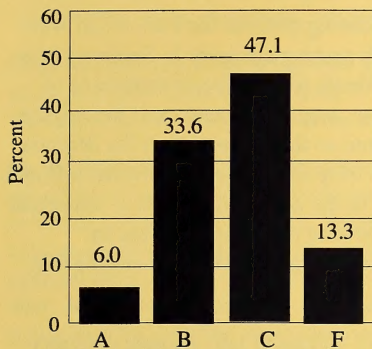
Diploma Examination Results

Examiners' Report for January 1994

CANADIANA

AUG 9 1995

School-Awarded Mark

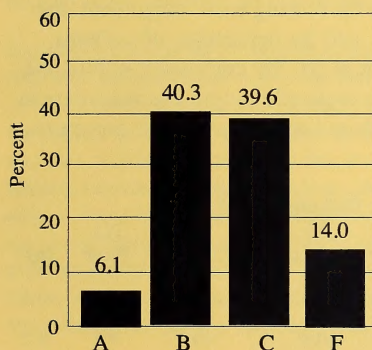


The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the public with an overview of results from the January 1994 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been mailed to schools and school jurisdiction offices. An annual provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, June, and August results is published each year.

Description of the Examination

The English 33 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each section is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Diploma Examination Mark

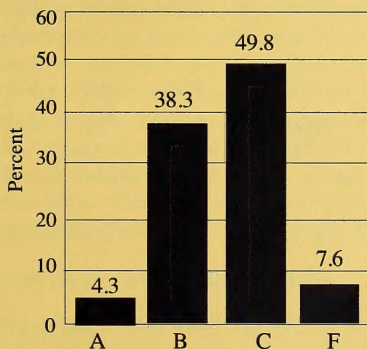


Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 4 903 students who wrote the January 1994 examination.

- 92.5% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 4.3% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Final Course Mark



Generally, student achievement in relation to standards in English 33 was satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving the acceptable standard was slightly lower than the proportion in January 1993 but slightly higher than the proportion in June 1993. The proportion of students achieving the standard of excellence was higher than it was in January 1993 and June 1993. This slight increase in the proportion of students at the standard of excellence is noteworthy given the increase in standards on Part A (see page 2).

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 61.0%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 62.6%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 62.4%

Part A: Written Response

Part A: Written Response is written at a different time from *Part B: Reading*. Students are required to complete three writing assignments, each of which assesses a variety of writing and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing the results is at the **(3) Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are in the *1993–94 School Year English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*, which is available in all high schools.

For the January 1994 administration, a number of changes were made to the scoring process for Part A and were communicated to teachers and students in the bulletin. The name of the fourth scoring category in Section I was changed from *Matters of Convention* to *Matters of Correctness* to provide students with a clearer statement of what is expected; that is, that the expectations for correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics were higher than in the past. The scoring criteria in this category were rewritten so that the standard for *Matters of Correctness* in English 33 would be the same as it is in English 30. The *Writing Skills* criteria in Section II and the *Total Impression* criteria in Section III were also written so as to conform to the new standard. It is important to note that the intention behind the name change for this category and the rewriting of the criteria was **to increase the standard and expectation for correctness in English 33**. It is essential that students realize that their writing on Part A must demonstrate control of *Matters of Correctness*.

In addition, the three scoring categories formerly used to mark Section III were collapsed into a single category named *Total Impression*. All new criteria are presented on pages 15 to 24 of the bulletin.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. The average raw score for Part A was 28.7 out of 50. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark (%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores					
			(5) Excellent	(4) Proficient	(3) Satisfactory	(2) Limited	(1) Poor	Ins*
Personal Response to Literature The student is required to read a piece of literature and to write a response from a personal perspective.	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.2	18.9	55.3	22.3	2.1	0.2
	Organization	5.0	1.2	17.0	60.9	19.4	1.2	0.2
	Matters of Choice	5.0	1.4	18.6	61.7	16.4	1.7	0.2
	Matters of Correctness	5.0	1.5	18.1	53.2	23.6	3.3	0.2
Functional Writing The student is required to write a response to a particular situation (e.g., a business letter or application).	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.1	17.6	47.7	32.2	1.3	0.1
	Writing Skills	5.0	0.9	14.6	58.0	24.2	2.1	0.1
Response to Visual Communication The assignment asks the student to respond to a photograph. The student is required to write about main ideas in relation to techniques of visual communication.	Total Impression	10.0	0.7	9.7	48.1	38.8	2.3	0.3

*Ins (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded a **(3) Satisfactory** level of performance.

Examiners' Comments

Section I: Personal Response to Literature

The assignment attached to the excerpt from Stuart Dybek's short story, "Nighthawks," evoked many interesting student responses. This assignment asked students to juggle three concepts, "imagination," "inner strength," and the facing of "difficult situations"—a fairly complex task for many English 33 students.

Most students explored positive themes such as "Imagination can allow us to escape momentarily from difficult situations," "Imagination gives hope," "Imagination is a wondrous thing that provides us with opportunities to learn and to grow," and "Imagination, rather than drugs, provides us with a 'safe' escape from reality."

Other students took an opposing view and chose to develop themes such as "Imagination is time wasted; other skills provide the inner strength to overcome adversity," "We should *decide* what we want to be rather than *imagine* what we want to be," and "Imagination is for the weak; it is the doers who get things done."

Most students understood the requirements of the assignment. They commented on the events of the excerpt in light of people's use of the imagination and then commented upon imagination, inner strength, and/or difficult situations by referring to their own observations or experiences. Some students, however, elected to retell the events of the excerpt without really attempting to tie these events to the use of the imagination, to inner strength, or to the facing of difficult situations. A few even got sidetracked and wrote mainly about the effects of unemployment. Such students received low scores for Thought and Detail. Many students used quotations from the excerpt judiciously and thoughtfully in their responses; however, some students appeared to be "padding" their compositions by copying copiously from the preamble to the excerpt, the excerpt itself, and the preamble to the assignment. Again, students who wrote such responses received low scores for Thought and Detail. It is important that students realize that they *must* explore the idea presented in the assignment box on page 3 of the examination booklet if they expect to do well on Section I.

Students achieving the acceptable standard displayed a defensible understanding of the excerpt and developed a conventional but clear thesis about the use of the imagination. Many of these students said that the narrator from "Nighthawks" was using his imagination to escape momentarily from his depression caused by unemployment and that this momentary escape gave him the reserve he needed to continue. In fact, imagination as an appropriate escape was the most common idea presented by students. Generally, students at this level of achievement handled the organization of their compositions well, but their introductions were often abrupt (e.g., beginning, "In 'Nighthawks' the narrator. . .") and their conclusions short—often a single sentence. These students displayed a conventional vocabulary and generally clear syntax. Most were able to use compound structures and to compose complex sentences. Occasionally, students achieving the acceptable standard were able to achieve stylistic effects such as emphasis by using a well-positioned short sentence or such techniques as rhetorical questioning. These students had general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics even though their writing did display the occasional lapse in control of syntax and usage and the occasional error in grammar and mechanics.

Students achieving the standard of excellence responded to subtleties of the excerpt from "Nighthawks," demonstrating well-considered and, at times, insightful understanding of the excerpt and of the expectations of the assignment. Some of these students noted the similarity between the "greasy spoon" that the narrator dislikes and avoids, and the diner in Edward Hopper's painting that is, ironically, sought out by the narrator. They saw this as an indication that the narrator realized that his difficult situation was still a reality, still to be faced. Many of these students compared the narrator's reactions to the Public Library and the Art Institute meaningfully in terms of the conditions that must be met to allow the imagination to operate. Observations made by these students, and experiences recounted, were detailed and significant and tied to the theses that they were developing. Students at this level of achievement wrote effective introductions that provided direction for the reader. Often their introductions were separate paragraphs that explored the topic of "imagination" and set the context for the development of their ideas. They were able to manipulate syntax for stylistic effect and to use figures of speech and connotations to add to their meanings. These students demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

Section II: Functional Writing

The January 1994 Functional Writing assignment required students to write a letter of invitation to Ms Maggie Cameron and to inform her that she was to be honoured at a Salute-to-Volunteers evening on March 9, 1994 by being named Nalwen's Volunteer of the Year and recipient of the prestigious Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award. In their letters, students were expected to state their purpose for writing and to provide Ms Cameron with all of the information she would need to enable her to participate in and enjoy the evening's program. Students were also advised to use an appropriate tone.

The majority of the students produced satisfactory, or better, work on this assignment. However, markers noted that many of the letters were less well developed than they should be. This is particularly troubling in light of the fact that students had an extra 30 minutes to deal with Part A: Written Response in January 1994.

To do well on the Functional Writing assignment, students must be able to anticipate the needs of the letter's recipient—to discern the specific information that this individual needs in order to understand the purpose of the letter and the expectations that he or she is to meet. In other words, the letter writer must be able to assume the role of the letter's recipient and to ask the question, "If I were this letter's receiver, what would I need to know?"

It is also essential that students take the time to proofread their letters and correct any errors in sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics that might be present. The skills needed to produce clear, correctly written communication that is similar to "real world" communication are essential for English 33 students to master.

Students achieving the acceptable standard sustained a general awareness of audience and provided information sufficient to fulfill their purpose such as the date, time, and place of the gathering. Most students achieving at this level provided a closing to their letters and left Ms Cameron with a means of contacting the letter writer for further information. Students achieving the standard of excellence sustained an awareness of audience and an appropriate tone throughout their letters. They provided specific information that would be helpful to Ms Cameron, such as the evening's itinerary and appropriate dress code and information about Ms Cameron's expected role—most often that a short acceptance speech was anticipated. Some students achieving at this level added information that would have been personally helpful to Ms Cameron, such as an indication that she could bring guests to the function or that she could name a representative to accept the award on her behalf. Most made it clear that they were writing as representatives of their English 33 class.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

The markers felt that the photograph, which showed a youngster apparently being disciplined by an adult, was a particularly good one for the purpose of the assignment on Section III. It was encouraging to see that many students responded with fairly substantial compositions. Often the length of their responses to Section III exceeded the length of their responses to Section II. Generally, students appeared to connect well with the photograph and to respond in a genuine manner.

Three main approaches to the photograph appeared in the students' writing. Many students wrote about "the child in trouble," noting that "Disobedience is not acceptable," "Appropriate behaviour must be taught to children who misbehave," or "Proper behaviour is essential in our society." These students often employed a moralistic tone. Some students identified strongly with the "girl in pink," noting that "Children are the symbol of purity and innocence—here a child is being unfairly punished by a day-care attendant" or "Children can't be children anymore." Other students took the middle ground and asserted that "As we grow up, we learn new things; some of these things we learn through tough experiences" or "Things that we learn in childhood help us to react, as adults, in different situations."

To do well on the Response to Visual Communication assignment, students must be able to determine an *idea* being communicated by the photograph and provide evidence from the photograph to support the belief that this idea is being communicated. (See the assignment box on page 23 of the examination booklet.) It is not enough for students to state that the photograph communicates a *topic*, such as "discipline" or a *concept*, such as "a girl in trouble." To do well, students must fully interpret the photograph and *generalize* beyond the world of the photograph.

Students achieving the acceptable standard tended to interpret the photograph in a conventional way, often as a statement about the behaviour of the girl in the photograph or the adult whose arm and pointing finger are shown. Many students at this level described the "girl in pink," noting her facial expression, hands-in-pockets stance, and turned ankle, and interpreted these details as suggesting that the girl was embarrassed or upset. The pointed finger, representing authority, also figured prominently in these responses. Students achieving the standard of excellence provided actual themes that generalized, beyond the photograph, about some aspect of the human condition. These students selected details from the photograph to support these generalizations. For example, some students noted that the line on the floor formed by the juncture of linoleum and carpeting symbolized the distinction between experience and innocence. Some students at this level also made reference to the choices that appear to have been made by the photographer, such as use of camera angle, cropping, or plane of focus to increase the effectiveness of the photograph.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	C	75.6
2	B	56.5
3	D	83.3
4	D	59.0
5	C	63.7
6	A	61.1
7	D	79.9
8	C	87.2
9	D	84.8
10	B	86.4
11	B	79.1
12	D	57.5
13	C	72.5
14	B	67.9
15	C	75.6
16	D	76.4
17	D	58.5
18	B	56.3
19	C	81.4
20	C	61.5
21	B	66.6
22	D	68.6
23	A	81.5
24	B	49.8
25	B	49.2
26	C	86.2
27	A	77.7
28	A	74.4
29	C	56.5
30	A	79.2
31	B	55.8
32	B	78.2
33	C	66.1
34	B	71.6
35	D	76.4
36	C	64.3
37	B	45.9
38	B	52.5
39	C	85.0
40	D	46.9
41	D	48.6
42	A	57.9
43	D	80.2
44	C	82.0
45	A	72.5
46	B	56.9
47	A	63.5
48	C	86.3
49	D	76.8
50	B	69.9
51	C	68.1
52	A	71.4
53	A	51.2
54	A	45.3
55	D	51.0
56	C	75.3
57	A	30.8
58	A	75.6
59	B	64.9
60	A	80.5
61	B	62.6
62	C	67.5
63	C	85.5
64	D	86.2
65	B	61.7
66	—	—
67	D	65.4
68	A	70.3
69	D	50.3
70	A	50.2

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks,* one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: according to the curricular content being tested and according to the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1994 according to these classifications.

Classification by Course Content	Classification by Thinking Skills			Total
	Literal Understanding	Inference and Application	Evaluation	
Main Ideas/Details	19, 26, 28, 67	1, 2, 8, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 38, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 59, 60	4, 5, 11, 14, 36, 43, 55, 61	30 Items (21%)
Relationship between Form and Content	13, 40	6, 15, 16, 18, 21, 39, 41, 53, 57, 62, 66*, 70	52	15 Items (11%)
Human Experience and Values		3, 7, 9, 10, 37, 42, 47, 54, 56, 58, 63, 64, 69	12, 17, 20, 65, 68	18 Items (13%)
Knowledge of Revision and Editing	35	29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34		7 Items (5%)
Total	7 Items (5%)	49 Items (35%)	14 Items (10%)	70 Items (50%)

* Question 66 was dropped from the examination before mark calculations were made. The total mark possible, therefore, was 69.

Subtest Results**

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 46.7 out of 69

Course Content

- Main Ideas/Details: 20.9 out of 30
- Relationship between Form and Content: 8.6 out of 14
- Human Experience and Values: 12.3 out of 18
- Knowledge of Revision and Editing: 4.8 out of 7

** Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

Standards

During the marking session, a committee of five English 33 teachers reviewed Part B to determine whether the standards embedded in the readings and questions were appropriate and fair, relative to curricular and public expectations. The committee members generally concurred that the examination set an appropriate standard of achievement for graduating English 33 students. Generally, they found the reading selections to be relevant, challenging, and engaging, and the questions to be appropriate and fair.

Deleted Question

However, all five teachers felt that Question 66 had more than one alternative that could be defended as being correct. This was confirmed by the results: both the keyed response, A, and an "incorrect" alternative, D, were chosen by the students who achieved high scores on the examination, and the correlation between question 66 and the rest of the questions on Part B was very low. The decision was made to delete Question 66 from the examination before students' marks were calculated.

Detailed Discussion

The following table gives results for six multiple-choice questions. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups. The comments following the table discuss some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

Student Group	Question Number					
	35	47	48	53	54	57
All Students	76.4	63.5	86.3	51.2	45.3	30.8
Students achieving the <i>standard of excellence</i> (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	96.6	91.9	99.0	86.9	77.4	46.1
Students achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	73.4	53.9	86.4	37.7	39.1	27.8

35. A word that is pronounced exactly like another word but has a different meaning and is spelled differently is called a homonym. In this letter, Robin has misused the homonym

- A. way (paragraph 1)
- B. here (paragraph 1)
- C. through (paragraph 3)
- D. there (paragraph 4)

Question 35 was the last question in the set of seven questions which was designed to test students' knowledge of revision and editing. These questions were classified under Reporting Category 4 of the English 33 Diploma Examination blueprint for Part B, *Knowledge of Revision and Editing*. In answering questions such as these, students are required to make decisions about appropriate revisions to a piece of writing. (See page 29 of the 1993–94 *School Year English 33 Information Bulletin*.)

The seven questions had a range of difficulty from 55.8 (Question 31) to 79.2 (Question 30) and are representative of the kind of question classified under reporting category 4. Question 35 asked students to determine which homonym from a list of four had been misused by Robin—she had used “there” where she should have used “their.” This was an easy question; 76.4% of all students answered correctly. This number included 96.6% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence and 73.4% of the students who received marks between 50% and 64%; 45.4% of the students who failed the examination answered question 35 correctly.

It is interesting to note that while many students seem to be able to determine incorrect usage when called upon to do so, they continue to commit these kinds of usage errors in their own writing. It is essential that students *consciously* apply their skills in this area when proofing and revising their own writing on Part A.

Questions 47, 48, 53, and 54 were four of a set of 12 questions based on an article by Robert Whitcomb entitled “The New Pilgrim’s Progress: An Odyssey of the Unemployed.” The 12 questions had a range of difficulty from 45.3 (Question 54) to 86.3 (Question 48) and are typical of the kinds of questions that are classified under reporting categories 1, 2, and 3 of the blueprint for Part B.

Questions 47 and 54 were classified under Reporting Category 3, *Human Experience and Values*. Questions such as these require students to identify a writer’s attitudes and values and/or the attitudes and values of characters in literature. In responding to questions of this sort, students are expected to recognize the relationship between attitudes and values and the social and cultural environment that shapes these attitudes and values.

47. The manner in which the “copper” on the banana wharf (line 41) responds is influenced by

- A. people’s appearances
- B. official regulations
- C. respect for justice
- D. fear of fires

Question 47 drew the attention of the students to the writer’s experience of being arrested for smoking on the banana wharf in New Orleans after “weeks of tramping about” while a well-dressed man was merely cautioned for the same offense. This question was of average difficulty for students; 63.5% of all students answered correctly. Students who achieved the standard of excellence found this to be a relatively easy question, however, since 91.9% of them answered correctly. Only 53.9% of the students who received marks between 50% and 64% answered correctly, and only 35.5% of the students who failed the examination answered correctly.

54. The narrator’s final comment, “I can still taste the peculiar flavor of mush and molasses; I can still hear the pounding of locomotives, and feel the coal dust in my eyes” (lines 104–106), indicates that his experiences were

- A. indelible
- B. destructive
- C. monotonous
- D. uninteresting

Question 54 asked students to determine the significance to the writer of his experiences as an “unemployed” vagabond. This was the most difficult question in the set of 12; 45.3% of all students answered correctly. It may have been that the key, “indelible,” was not in the vocabulary of many of the students who wrote the examination, but this word *is* footnoted on page 6 of the Readings Booklet and this footnote should have acted as a reference for these students. The students who achieved the standard of excellence did fairly well on this question; 77.4% of them answered correctly. However, only 39.1% of the students who scored between 50% and 64%, and only 24.3% of the students who failed the examination, answered correctly.

48. When the narrator says that he did not have a “prepossessing appearance” (line 43), he means that he was not

- A. talented
- B. grateful
- C. appealing
- D. intelligent

53. When the narrator writes “Thus it was to be ‘idle’” (lines 100–101), his tone is

- A. sarcastic
- B. apathetic
- C. remorseful
- D. self-pitying

57. The fact that Ryokun drives out “unpleasant memories of the conduit” (lines 28–29) by anticipating another exciting adventure is an example of

- A. irony
- B. climax
- C. symbolism
- D. foreshadowing

Question 48 was classified under Reporting Category 1, *Main Ideas/Details*. This question tested the students’ ability to understand the phrase “prepossessing appearance.” The students found this question to be very easy; 86.3% of all students answered correctly. Nearly all of the students achieving the standard of excellence answered correctly—99.0%. Even 51.7% of the students who failed the examination answered question 48 correctly.

Question 53 was classified under Reporting Category 2, *Relationship between Form and Content*. This question tested the students’ ability to infer the tone of a statement from the article—“Thus it was to be ‘idle.’” Students found this question to be challenging; only 51.2% of all students answered correctly by choosing the key, “sarcastic.” Often students writing the English 33 diploma examination appear to have difficulty identifying the tone of a statement, particularly when irony or sarcasm is involved. Questions such as question 53 often discriminate very highly between students doing well on the examination and those doing less well. This was certainly the case with question 53 since 86.9% of the students achieving the standard of excellence answered correctly, while only 37.7% of the students scoring between 50% and 64% answered correctly. Students who failed the examination appeared to guess at question 53; only 22.9% of these students answered correctly.

Question 57 was one of a set of 15 questions based on an excerpt from Fumio Niwa’s novel, *The Buddha Tree*. It had the distinction of being the most difficult question on Part B. Only 30.8% of all students answered correctly. This number included 46.1% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence and 27.8% of the students who scored between 50% and 64%. The five teachers who acted as standards confirmers for Part B discussed question 57 at length and advised that the question be left on the examination in spite of its difficulty. They felt that even though question 57 is the type of question that only the most capable students in English 33 can be expected to answer correctly, it represents a reasonable expectation for those excellent students who should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skill.

The majority of the students selected “D. foreshadowing” as the answer to this question rather than “A. irony,” which was the correct response. Question 57 directed students to a section from the excerpt in which Ryokun, the protagonist, is remembering an “underground adventure” that he and his friend, Nobu, had experienced. They had crawled through a conduit during a day of drought and had been terrified. The author spends a great deal of ink on the conduit—how it would be full of water now, how Ryokun imagines himself trapped inside, how the boys would be in no danger of being sucked into the conduit unless they purposefully swam upstream—so much is said about the conduit that the reader begins to expect that it will play an important part in the boys’ present adventure. However, once the boys begin swimming in the flooded river, the conduit plays no further part in the plot. Technically, the fact that Ryokun drives out “unpleasant memories of the conduit” by anticipating his swim is not, therefore, an example of foreshadowing; it is an example of irony. It is interesting to note that a good example of foreshadowing *does* appear a few lines later in the excerpt. In lines 33–35, the author states, “Even the willow trees along the dykes looked as if they were struggling to hold on to the flooded soil in a desperate attempt to prevent themselves from being carried away.” The reader knows, at this point, that the boys will be in danger of being swept away by the floodwaters if the firmly rooted willow trees are themselves in danger.

For further information, contact Tom Dunn, Gloria Malick, or Elana Scraba at the Student Evaluation Branch, 427–0010.